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ABSTRACT

This report examines the racial climate on the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) campus and makes a series of recommendations for improvements in several areas. It reveals evidence of racial and other problems on the MIT campus through information gained in two surveys: The 1984 Quality of Student Life Survey, and the 1985 Black Alumni Survey. Among the areas discussed are the following: (1) an overview of the survey's findings; (2) the confidence, preparation, and adjustment experienced by black students; (3) perspectives of the living group experience of black students; (4) perspectives on the learning environment; (5) support programs for black students; and (6) general observations of the black experience on campus. The report also explains some of the actions taken, or that are being planned, by the Minority Student Issues Group (MSIG) and MIT. Finally, recommendations are presented covering the areas of equal opportunity responsibility, the hiring of minority faculty, and promotion of pluralism. Appendices include the chronology of the MSIG organization, the response demographics of the 1984 Quality of Student Life Questionnaire, and methods and sample information of the 1985 Black Alumni Survey Instrument. (GLR)

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The Racial Climate on the MIT Campus

A Report of the Minority Student Issues Group

Shirley M. McBay, Chair
Office of the Dean for Student Affairs
September 1986

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The Racial Climate on the MIT Campus

A Report of the
Minority Student Issues Group

Shirley M. McBay, Chair
Office of the Dean for Student Affairs
September 1986

PREFACE

This is the first of a series of papers to be issued by the Minority Student Issues Group (MSIG) to the MIT community. Its primary purpose is to inform MIT faculty, staff, and students of what the MSIG has learned over the past two years about the racial climate on MIT's campus and to make recommendations for change.

The report is also intended to serve as a basis for serious discussion and action by groups and individuals around the Institute on the problems and opportunities suggested by our findings.

MIT must think anew about its policies and procedures for dealing with racism and racist behavior on its campus. It must reaffirm its intent to provide a supportive and non-hostile environment for all who study, live, and work here. Individual MIT faculty, staff, and students can assist in meeting the Institute's commitment to provide such an environment by not permitting racist statements and acts in this community to go unchallenged. We can each consciously discourage, in public and private ways, racism and other discriminatory behavior in our community.

The decision to act against racism can be made on other than moral grounds. Racist behavior is demeaning to each of us; it is delimiting and debilitating. Everyone is deprived of a mutual learning experience. Racism hurts MIT's reputation, and impedes the Institute's ability to attract and retain able students of all races.

Such action is particularly important since MIT, as one of the world's leading scientific and technological institutions, is attempting to assume its obligations by making special efforts for Black and other minority students enrolling here to be successful.

I am personally encouraged, by my own observations and experiences here, that MIT through its exceptional people, programs, and policies can meet these challenges. The generous commitment of time and energy of each member of the MSIG is but one important indication that MIT has the will and the capacity for effective change.

Shirley M. McBay, Chair
The Minority Student Issues Group

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A REPORT ON THE RACIAL CLIMATE ON THE MIT CAMPUS

SEPTEMBER 1986

INTRODUCTION

This is the first of a series of papers to be prepared for the MIT community by the Minority Student Issues Group (MSIG), a broadly based group of senior officers, tenured faculty, and staff at the Institute convened by Shirley M. McBay, Dean for Student Affairs. A chronology of the evolution and activities of the MSIG is in Appendix A.

This paper will examine the racial climate on the MIT campus and will make a series of recommendations for improvement in several areas. The second paper, to be issued by the MSIG in December, will focus on MIT recruitment, admissions, and financial aid procedures as they relate to minority* students, with recommendations. The third paper, to be released in February 1987, will discuss ways in which the Institute's faculty, staff, and students are and can be increasingly supportive of Black and other minority students so that they can experience greater academic and personal success at MIT. A fourth paper on the recruitment of minority faculty will be issued in May 1987.

We wish to acknowledge the significant commitment demonstrated by the Institute over the years to the presence of minorities on campus and to the provision of a supportive environment for members of minority groups. Its long-term support of special offices and activities on behalf of minority students and staff, its increased hiring in recent years of minority administrators, and its willingness to support new initiatives on behalf of current and potential minority students all provide concrete evidence of the Institute's commitment to diversity within its community. Still, we offer several recommendations for change which we feel will be beneficial. Several of these are contained in this report while others will be made directly to particular offices, departments, and committees.

We are also encouraged by the concrete changes that have occurred in several areas during the lifetime of the MSIG. These early results suggest to us that when the larger MIT community becomes more knowledgeable of the real or perceived barriers to success faced by some of its members, there will be strong support for immediate improvement.

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* The term "minority" in this paper refers to American Indians, Blacks, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans who are underrepresented at MIT in comparison with their representation in the general population. Asians, while a minority in the U.S. population, are not underrepresented at MIT. Although not considered in these papers, there are issues to be addressed regarding the experiences of Asian students at MIT as well.

Further, it is our firm belief that, by addressing issues related to Black and other minority students, we will improve the quality of life for all MIT students. Such efforts, we believe, will result in a more responsive and caring environment for everyone and in a greater sense of community.

Issues in this and subsequent papers have been identified through (1) the responses and comments of a group of minority students to a Quality of Life questionnaire and a series of follow-up forums during the Spring of 1984; (2) the results of a Fall 1985 telephone survey of a group of Black alumni about their MIT undergraduate experience; and (3) on-going discussions within the S-MSIG, a student version of the MSIG that began meeting during the summer of 1986 (see inside back cover for a list of S-MSIG members). The papers also reflect many hours of deliberation by the MSIG and its various task forces as well as discussions of the results of the Black Alumni Survey with many senior officers, faculty, staff, and students around MIT.

It was the reports by recent Black alumni of overt racist behavior by several faculty and students that made clear the existence of serious racial problems at MIT. Black alumni provided several examples reflecting the low expectations white faculty and white peers had of Black students. The examples called into question the quality and level of support available to Black and possibly other minority students in academic departments and in living groups.

We believe that, regardless of concerns that some may have about the preparation of Black and other minority students for MIT and their subsequent performance as a group at the Institute, racist behavior is unacceptable and should not continue. The survey results suggested an urgent need to address the issues of racist behavior and racism on our campus. Consequently, we have made the decision to devote the first of our four papers to these concerns and to deal with other important issues in subsequent papers.

Emerging from our studies is the concept of pluralism which embodies ideals we believe the Institute should embrace:

> "Pluralism as a social condition is that state of affairs in which several distinct ethnic, religious, and racial communities live side by side, willing to affirm each other's dignity, ready to benefit from each other's experience, and quick to acknowledge each other's contributions to the common welfare. Pluralism is different from the contemporary concept of 'diversity' in which individuals from various groups are merely present, just as it differs from the idea of 'integration' in which minority individuals are asked, explicitly or implicitly, to abandon their cultural identity in order to merge into the majority community."*

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* "The American University and the Pluralist Ideal", Brown University, May 1986, p. ix; Report of the Visiting Committee on Minority Life and Education at Brown University. (This is one of three studies from other institutions, obtained, thus far, that bear on issues being addressed by the MISG.)

We also found the following descriptions of the types of racism helpful to us in our deliberations:

"Racism ... is of two basic sorts. One is an explicit animosity and use of power designed to put members of another race than one's own at a disadvantage, or to keep them there if they are already disadvantaged. The other is institutional racism, namely those structural patterns in institutional life which are the remaining footprints of a racist mentality and practice, whether or not currently supported by explicit and conscious racism... Institutional racism is the more difficult form to identify, diagnose, and rectify. It is more a consequence of silence or inaction than a result of animosity or ill will. It is evident more by what is neglected than by what is taught, more by research left undone than by inquiries that are launched."**

We strongly encourage other groups around the Institute to discuss this report and the concept of pluralism in their respective areas. If necessary, assistance in initiating such discussions may be requested from the Equal Opportunity Office, the Special Assistants to the President, the Personnel Office, the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs, the Office of Minority Education, the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School, or any of the members of the MSIG.

Student experiences in administrative and other offices, as well as in the classrooms, reflect the racial climate at MIT. It is important, therefore, that administrators initiate dialogue with their staffs about these issues, in keeping with their and the Institute's desire to have an environment free of racist behavior.

** Ibid. p. 6.

EVIDENCE OF RACIAL AND OTHER PROBLEMS

The 1984 Quality of Student Life Survey

The Quality of Student Life Survey was distributed to 1000 undergraduates, including all minority undergraduates, during the spring of 1984. Several follow-up forums were held with different student groups, including minority students, to better understand the experience of undergraduates at the Institute. The survey results and the forums formed the basis of a report to the Visiting Committee on Student Affairs which met on campus during the spring of 1985. Appendix B contains response demographics for the 1984 Quality of Student Life survey.

According to the report, the pace and pressure, while a significant concern for all student groups surveyed, was a major concern for minority students. Feelings of isolation, insecurity about the admissions selection process, and the perception that non-minority students believed lower standards were used in the admission of minority students were all described as major concerns. Minority students expressed anxiety over the level of self-help required by the Institute as well as about their families' ability to provide financial assistance. Many minority students reported that having to work often resulted in greater pressure on them. The feeling that a less than supportive environment exists was voiced strongly by minority students at the forums.

The survey results suggest that most minority students manage to perform adequately and many form trusting relationships, in spite of the perceived contempt from non-minority members of the community. Many students seem able to sustain a fairly strong racial identity without compromising their values; however, some have had to compromise values that support their racial and cultural identities in order to fit into the MIT environment.

Minority students attending the forums reported their interactions in the classroom and in class-related activities were often less than positive and they felt the need to continually prove they were equal, intellectually and socially. Students indicated feeling they were perceived as high risks by professors, teaching assistants, and students. This was sometimes apparent in the types of projects to which they were assigned and in the unwillingness of other students to join them in laboratory and study groups.

The perception of high risk was reported by some to add additional pressure to try to "overachieve" in order to "prove oneself." Others described having feelings of alienation that increased their anxiety, especially during examinations, about being able to achieve success.

As discussed in the Brown report cited earlier and elsewhere, low expectations by non-minority faculty and peers often lead minority students to internalize these expectations and to "live down" to them. Low expectations tend to limit personal and intellectual aspirations and to erode self-confidence and self-esteem.

Black students participating in the 1984 forums mentioned the considerable personal support found through living in the section of the New West Campus

Houses they refer affectionately to as "Chocolate City." In this environment, they did not feel obliged to explain cultural or ethnic differences as in some other settings.

Through the survey and the forums and, to some extent, the Visiting Committee's meeting, minority students expressed a number of specific and serious concerns, many of which appear to be unique to minority students. Their concerns are summarized as follows:

- Feelings of isolation;
- Insecurity about their admission because of the perception that others at the Institute believe lower standards are used when admitting minority students;
- Belief that others consider all minority students as high risks;
- Anxiety about their families' ability to provide the financial assistance expected by the Institute;
- Perceived contempt from non-minority students, faculty, administrators, and staff;
- Feelings of non-acceptance by faculty; and
- The existence of a generally non-supportive environment in which minorities must constantly prove they are equal, both intellectually and socially.

1985 Black Alumni Survey

Last fall, a group of recent Black alumni participated in a telephone survey about their undergraduate experiences at the Institute. The survey represents one of several efforts by the MSIG to explore concerns about the overall quality of the MIT undergraduate experience for minority students. The survey was conducted under the leadership of MSIG members David Wiley and John Wilson. The report on the results of the survey was prepared by these two individuals. The summary of their report that follows alerts the MIT community to a number of serious problems within our academic and living environments.

Many of the adjustment problems identified by the respondents involved racial issues that Blacks often face in predominantly white settings, and these problems tended to limit their sense of acceptance within the MIT community. As is likely the case for students in general, the respondents found the learning environment dominated by pressures related to workload and pace. These pressures, however, were frequently intensified by relationships with white faculty members that were characterized by minimal or no support, negative expectations, and sometimes discriminatory behavior. Many found racial and cultural barriers, racial incidents, and misunderstandings

prevalent in our living environment.

The serious nature of the issues identified through the Black Alumni Survey and through the 1984 Quality of Student Life Survey and Forums, makes clear the need for thoughtful and decisive action throughout our community. Actions already under way and other steps that can be taken are described following this summary. In addition, recommendations in other areas that have evolved over the last two years will be sent separately to the relevant offices. Deep and lasting change at the Institute, however, can occur only if each of us recognizes that serious problems exist and accepts some personal responsibility for their resolution. Without our personal involvement, these problems will continue unabated.

Overview of the Survey Findings

The aim of the Black Alumni Survey was to help MIT gain a better understanding of the attitudes, suggestions, and criticisms about the Institute and about the experience of being an undergraduate at MIT, from a group of recent Black alumni, some of whom had graduated from MIT and some who had not. The report on the survey provides an account of telephone discussions, lasting an average of 75 minutes, with a representative sample of 137 Black alumni across the country who entered the Institute between 1969 and 1981. The survey methods and samples are described in Appendix C.

While many recognized the long-term value of the analytical and problem-solving skills gained from an MIT education, most suggested that the costs were high. The respondents typically were very expressive in sharing what, in large part, were negative and critical views about their time at the Institute. It is clear to them that racism in the living and learning environments was not an incidental but a fundamental factor in these high costs.

A number of respondents experienced various adjustment problems that often led to diminished self-confidence. Many of the adjustments involved racial issues that Blacks frequently face in any predominantly white environment which, nevertheless, tended to limit their sense of acceptance within the MIT community. The adjustments also related to how they perceived their preparation for the academic pace and pressure of MIT. While they were prepared based upon admissions indicators, some perceived themselves to be less well prepared relative to other MIT students. Together, these experiences constituted a negative orientation to the MIT environment for many Black students.

Although "preparation" may be deficient for some non-minority students, adjustment to the pace and pressure is intensified for some minority students by their experiences within MIT's living and learning environments. To many Blacks, the living environment, particularly the predominantly white settings, was fraught with racial and cultural barriers, racial incidents, and misunderstandings. Most expressed discomfort with these conditions, and deciding how best to negotiate the environment (whether to separate or assimilate) in light of them was difficult for many.

In addition, these pressures were intensified by relationships of Black students with white faculty members that were often characterized by poor or

inadequate support, negative expectations for Black student achievement, and occasionally some shocking discriminatory behavior. This often led to a reluctance on the part of many Black students to seek academic help, and thus they lost the advantage of important educational resources. This may have made it substantially harder for students to perform academically.

In dealing with what many perceived as a generally negative or hostile environment, many took advantage of MIT's various support services. However, the adaptive response of many was to look mostly to the Black community for support, both informally and formally through such services as the Black Students' Union (BSU) Tutorial Program. This decision did not seem to be as much a decision against something as a decision for something -- a decision for a more affirmative and wholesome environment. Unable to eliminate racial barriers, and unable to find adequate support in the general MIT environment, many decided, as one respondent said, to "create a climate where Black people can achieve."

In short, the broad spectrum of feelings and thoughts indicate that the race-related and faculty-related difficulties were typically central to the Black experience at MIT. These difficulties not only underlay patterns of separate coexistence and separate educational development, but also combined to make the Black experience at MIT a unique struggle. The negative attitude that most Blacks in the survey held toward their student experience at MIT appears rooted in a number of serious institutional problems.

Confidence, Preparation, and Adjustment

The experiences that most respondents had with respect to confidence, preparation, and adjustment constituted a negative orientation to the MIT environment for many Black students.

- **42% experienced diminished self-confidence when they came to MIT (which for most of the nongraduates grew worse with time).**

Most connected this diminished self-confidence to the feeling of no longer being number one, the top, the best -- a shocking or jolting experience for many students of any race.

Diminished self-confidence was also connected in some cases with negative experiences with faculty members. A relatively large proportion of those whose confidence diminished: were generally negative about the support from faculty; perceived negative expectations from some faculty members about their academic performance; and had a negative attitude about seeking help. (See "Perspectives on the Learning Environment".) Some typical comments:

> I felt less competent. I doubted I could do very well. The professors were indifferent. The classes were very large. In high school, there was more involvement on the teachers' part; you got more positive feedback.

> I guess...when I came here I had heard stories about top students not making it at MIT. When I walked in I was a bit insecure...I was expecting something that I couldn't handle.

When exams started coming in and I was feeling like maybe I wasn't as good as the whites, but later I knew that I could hang. This experience taught me that my abilities are not the limiting factor, but instead the limiting factor is the time and effort I will put in.

- **A majority (53%) felt generally less well prepared in relation to their classmates.**

The reasons respondents gave for feeling generally less well prepared included having attended poor high schools, and not having the proper orientation to handle the largely unfamiliar pace and pressure of MIT. Those who mentioned diminished self-confidence tended also to be those who felt somewhat less prepared than other MIT students. Some examples of comments on preparation:

When my friends told me that the textbooks we were using at MIT they had already had in high school, that really hurt me. I didn't feel they were any smarter than me, they had just been better prepared.

There were two types of Blacks at MIT: those who were completely prepared for MIT and the rest of us. We had aptitude, but we couldn't keep up. White students -- their parents were engineers. They had taken apart the family car.

I had more than adequate mental capacity, but I was not exposed to enough of a challenge before MIT. The pace of MIT was torrid and generally oblivious to what high schools are doing. MIT's pace is more geared to private high schools. But, it was good that I, and others like me, were at MIT. It kept it from being elitist. The white guys were used to what was brand new for us.

- **While 82% had to make general adjustments related to pace, pressure, and workload, about 44% mentioned that they had to make additional adjustments as Black students.**

Descriptions of those adjustments included feeling less comfortable around whites; feeling a pressure to be an exemplary or model Black; being leery of racial prejudice; and having to handle the low expectations of professors.

I didn't have the luxury like any other white student. The fact that I was Black made me conscious of what my community needed. We [Blacks] had to endure the perceptions of faculty, staff, and students [all whites]. Additional pressure as a Black, because I felt that if I failed, these people would think that all Blacks fail.

The adjustments also often included having to decide how best to negotiate MIT's predominantly white environment, that is, whether to separate or assimilate.

The Black/white issue, living in two different worlds, was difficult.

> As a Black student I couldn't figure out how to act. Do I act all Black or part white. 'How Black is she?' came up. [White] people wanted to see how I'd respond. It seemed that even if I didn't say anything I was being categorized. It seemed I was stereotyped.

In summary, we realize that some of the adjustment problems relating to confidence, relative preparation, pace, and workload may or may not represent a set of adjustment problems unique to Blacks. In any case, it is clear that these more general pressures are exacerbated by race- and sometimes even class-related pressures and adjustments in MIT's predominantly white environment. In general, we found the pressures that are perhaps common to all students, coupled with those pressures and adjustments that are unique to Blacks, combine to constitute a formidable beginning for many MIT Blacks.

Perspectives on the Living Group Experience

- **Three-quarters of those who lived in predominantly white living-group settings described their experiences there in generally negative or mixed terms, while those who lived in predominantly Black living-group settings (approximately one-third of the respondents) were unanimously positive about their experiences there.**

A sense of community, fellowship, and belonging seemed to be the key to all positive living group experiences. The following are quotes from two respondents who lived in predominantly white living group environments and two respondents who lived in predominantly Black living group environments:

> There were only two Blacks in the whole dorm. All activities were without our real input because we were in the minority with little say-so. I stayed there out of necessity because it cost too much to move out.

> If I wanted to be more in keeping with the culture of Blacks, I would have had to be around more Blacks. The fact that I lived as one Black of 33 whites didn't help my Black identity.

> We had a suite at MacGregor. There was a closeness among the brothers. You could vent your frustrations. It was enjoyable. We helped one another and had common interests in sports, music, books, etc. As a Black student, you had to unite, be willing to help and be helped.

> I was in New House known as CC. It was primarily Black male students. That was one of the things that kept me [at MIT] as long as it did. The upperclassmen there serve as role models. We felt that being in a predominantly white institution after being in courses where you were a minority, it was nice to come home to an environment where you are not in the minority. I really liked CC. I thought it was great.

Another indication of the respondents' reactions to the MIT living environment includes their feelings about other students.

- **A majority (62%) expressed mixed or negative feelings about white MIT students in terms of their naivete about Blacks, narrowness of interests, and social interactions. Some (15%) voluntarily cited racial incidents involving other MIT students.**

- **Over 40 percent voluntarily described cultural barriers with white students or a sense of racial isolation in MIT's living environment; the majority spent most of their time with other Blacks.**

Examples of problems and incidents:

> There were two types of non-Blacks in terms of their attitude: the class of the elite and those who hadn't seen any Blacks except for television. Forty percent acted as if they had never dealt with Blacks before. There were two reactions. One was of novelty: 'My father told me about you.' The other class had gone to school with Blacks but chose to stay aloof. There was the perception that if you were Black, you were not there [MIT] on your own merit. That cut pretty deep.
>
> I felt a lot of pressure to be an exemplary Black. I didn't want something I said to affect the way they felt about all Blacks, so I was always on my best behavior. I regularly heard, 'You know, you're the first Black person I ever met.'
>
> The living experience was all right, but I didn't fit into the norm. A typical party was 'let's drink beer and get drunk and pass out.' I wasn't into that so I went to Black parties and just hung out with friends.
>
> Black/White problems are all cultural. I was in a class where we needed to do a group project. All of the groups formed without me, so the professor was forced to <u>assign</u> me. They tried to delegate the important tasks to themselves and tried to give me the trivial assignments. I set them straight, though. Any activity that required group work was a tremendous strain due to prejudicial attitudes.
>
> I didn't know too many white students because I'd get hostile feelings from them. They were too much into competition. They were too much into studies...building better bombs. MIT was their whole world and we couldn't be that way. We had to be concerned about the world because <u>we</u> were suffering there.
>
> There were 20 students from my high school in my MIT freshman class. Two were Black. The other Black student was the only one I stayed in touch with while I was at MIT. One of the white girls from my school told me that the others had voted on who they thought would most likely drop out and said that

I won. All of us were honor students in high school.

I remember that the white students showered freshmen on a particular night. The Black students did not want to participate in this incident. A Black student who was the only Black in the dorm was afraid and barricaded his door the night they were showering students. He felt they would do more than shower him. He was called 'nigger' and threatened by whites, beating on his door. By the time other Blacks from other dorms came over to help, the campus police were there. He had several posters of Black pride on his door. All of it was torn up by the white students.

A couple of friends and I were confronted by a carload of whites and harassed and got called the typical names. We knew they were MIT students.

In summary, the key to positive living group experiences was a sense of belonging and community among peers. This was more difficult to establish in the largely white settings, given that the living experience there for many was characterized by racial misunderstandings, conflict, and segregation. However, 28% also indicated hopes for an end to those problems by voluntarily suggesting that Blacks should at least try to associate with more whites, in spite of the difficulties posed by doing so.

Perspectives on the Learning Environment

Although there were some positive views on the learning environment, most respondents had highly critical views of MIT's learning environment and their experiences with MIT faculty members were central to that assessment.

Most appreciated the quality of the MIT education. Among the factors identified as having had a negative effect upon their academic performance were faculty members (mentioned by about 20%); their own relative lack of preparation, confidence, and discipline; and the workload, pace, and pressure. For many, the Black community had a positive effect due to the academic, psychological, and social benefits of that interaction.

Nearly one-quarter volunteered that the academic pace, pressure, and workload inhibited enjoyment of extracurricular or social aspects of life at MIT.

A major factor in their perspectives on the learning environment that seemed to intensify the other more general pressures of the learning environment concerns their assessment of MIT faculty members.

- **The majority of the respondents (55%) communicated generally negative perceptions of the personal and academic support provided by MIT faculty members (of the remainder, 26% indicated positive perceptions, 12% were mixed, and 7% had minimal interactions); 31% voluntarily said that faculty members expected failure or a lack of**

ability in Blacks; many (32%) voluntarily said that they developed negative attitudes about going for help; and some (15%) voluntarily mentioned specific racial incidents involving MIT faculty members.

Comments on low expectations and incidents:

> The main effect of being Black was the teachers' expectations -- they think that you automatically won't make it in the class. I was very frustrated. You had to be in the absolute top to overcome that.
>
> At times professors would ask me to drop the course when I didn't feel it was appropriate. This happened two or three times. They assumed I couldn't handle it and told me to drop instead of helping, and I was outraged.
>
> One professor had a hang-up about Black people. I went to talk to him about a grade, and he said that 'maybe you people should go somewhere and do things you people can do.' This was not uncommon. Many of my friends had this happen. Some departments were worse than others.
>
> Blacks were discriminated against in some departments. I had a professor who talked about reverse discrimination and how unfair it was for Blacks to be given the opportunity when they did not deserve it. He said the Institute should not help Black students through various programs like Interphase because things were not like that in the real world. He said we were given an unfair advantage. I went to him after I graduated and he apologized to me and said I was an exception.
>
> One classmate had a professor tell her that Blacks don't do well in math because they lack spatial sense and math sense. She was a straight 'A' student and this blew her mind -- and mine.
>
> As a sophomore in engineering, I had trouble and I went to the professor and he said, 'You people always have some kind of problems.' There was a test coming up that was right before the drop date. After the exam, I told him that I wasn't sure how I did and he told me to drop the course. I dropped the course and found out I got an 'A' on the exam. He told me to switch majors because it probably wasn't my calling in life and I couldn't handle it. He thought my 'A' was a fluke. That really had an effect on me. I was mad.
>
> A professor stayed after class one time to ask me a question. He told me that his son did not make it into MIT and that it was a shame that I had made it in. He felt that Blacks could not be engineers....The faculty in the department told me that, because I flunked one course, if I stayed in the department, at the next opportunity, they would disqualify me.

> I left the department because of this. That was at the end of my junior year. This didn't just happen to me. From the feedback I got from other Black students, [other departments] were just as bad.

Negative encounters with faculty members helped in leading Black students to develop an informal communications network or grapevine that would advise Blacks on which faculty members were supportive (with whom it would be all right to interact), as well as which faculty members were not supportive or were antagonistic.

Negative encounters also often led to a negative attitude about seeking academic help. Examples:

> I had difficulty with the instructors' attitudes, so I didn't use them [instructors]. It was either patronizing or completely negative (i.e., Why are you wasting my time if you aren't capable of learning it anyway?).

> My reluctance to approach TAs or professors to help fill the gaps in my knowledge had a negative effect on my academic performance. I don't really know why that is. In my freshman year, I went for help and was told to drop the course. I worked hard and got an 'A' on the final and didn't go for help again. It created a barrier.

Concerning the respondents' specific relationships with faculty members:

- **Nearly 40% mentioned having a good relationship with one or more faculty members; almost 15% mentioned having a bad relationship with one or more faculty members; approximately 40% of the good relationships mentioned were with Black faculty members (60% were with non-Black faculty). One to two percent of the faculty (the Black faculty members) thus accounted for 40% of the good relationships mentioned. All of the bad relationships mentioned were with white faculty members.**

- **More than a third of those graduates who mentioned good relationships with faculty mentioned relationships with Black faculty only.**

> A Black faculty person in my department helped me to see abilities in myself. The others (non-Black faculty) never wanted to identify your potential.

In summary, the conduct and attitudes of some MIT faculty members have a negative and far-reaching effect upon Black students. The data indicate that good relationships with white faculty are exceptions to a general rule of limited contact, problematic or poor support, and, in some cases, blatant discriminatory behavior.

Support Programs for Black Students

- **Nearly a quarter of the respondents voluntarily suggested that the counseling provided by departments and by MIT in general was inadequate or ineffective.**

- **The support provided by the minority services (Interphase, the Office of Minority Education, and the Black Students' Union Tutorial Program) was important, as the generally positive reviews indicated. Some (26%) made a special point of suggesting that the minority services were necessary and helpful.**

In addition to the support provided by the various services, the major adaptive response to the difficulties posed by both the living and learning environments was separation, meaning the movement of Blacks together to form a more positive and affirmative environment than the one provided by the larger white community.

Separation was a significant support in the learning environment:

While 60% of the respondents specifically mentioned some good relationships with faculty, administrators, and other employees, over half (53%) of those relationships mentioned were with Blacks. Clearly, a very small number of people (the Black administrators, faculty, and employees at MIT) play a crucial part in the support, encouragement, and role-modeling that characterize the relationships.

For 40% of the respondents who mentioned having had good relationships, the relationships they described were with Blacks only.

The BSUTP filled the vacuum created by the strained relations with and lack of academic support from some white faculty members. It played a substitutional role for many Black students (as opposed to a supplemental role).

> The BSUTP helped tremendously. My stay at MIT would have been a heck of a lot harder. There was more to it than tutoring. We could all really understand and relate to each other, and that was essential. The tutors could understand who we were and where we were coming from. Having a Black advisor meant a lot.
>
> You get tired of having to stand up to everybody. I didn't have any support systems. Professors should have been more fair. A lot of times, they told me I wasn't prepared or capable. They assumed that I would fail. It took all I had to get out of this place. The BSUTP was of great help.

Separation as a support was also significant in the living environment:

- **As stated earlier, a third of the respondents lived in predominantly Black settings, and 44% hung out primarily with other Blacks. Twelve percent said that they really did not get to know any white students while at MIT.**

- **Two-thirds made a point of saying that the Black community at MIT was sustaining and essential to their MIT experience. Two-thirds placed emphasis upon their MIT experience as a Black experience.**

- **Nearly 40 percent voluntarily made a point of saying that MIT needs more Blacks on all levels as comrades and role models.**

In summary, many respondents viewed the minority supports as helpful and tended to have more mixed views about other services. Much of the data suggest that separation as a support was the major way in which Blacks responded to what was seen by many as a generally negative or hostile environment. As an adaptive response, many Blacks decided to create a more affirmative and wholesome environment in order to achieve and grow. Separation, therefore, became synonymous with support, which, in turn, became synonymous with enlarging their peer network (more Black students), as well as their mentor network (more Black faculty and staff). One respondent said:

> Things get better with more numbers. MIT needs more Black students and faculty. We need role models and arbitrators. I don't see that they can change who is there -- there were white professors who disliked Blacks. We can't change that, so there should be more Blacks to counter it.

General Observations

Though the majority of the respondents had viewed their MIT experience negatively while they were students, feeling that it was dominated by academic and racial struggles, in hindsight most expressed mixed or positive feelings about their experience, felt it was their best choice, and said they would do it again. Said one respondent:

> MIT is a nice place to be <u>from</u>, but not a nice place to be <u>at</u>.

The Black experience at MIT was clearly unique in the views of the respondents. Though Blacks faced the same pressures as other MIT students (academic workload, pace and pressures, as well as general adjustments), there was a distinguishing set of race-related pressures and difficulties that made an already pressurized experience worse.

There were race-related and faculty-related problems with respect to the orientation and adjustment process, and the learning environment, and race-related problems in the living environment. These problems affected nearly all Black students at MIT; while creating a need for support, they also underlay patterns of separate coexistence and separate educational development that for many students satisfied the need for support under the circumstances that were experienced.

These issues constitute a group of urgent problems that require a serious and sensitive institutional response. The findings of the survey provide a basis for constructive dialogue within the MIT community and should help guide our efforts for improvement of all aspects of the experience of minority students at MIT -- to ultimately make the MIT environment more responsive to the needs of all students and achieve a greater level of understanding and support.

SOME RECENT ACTIONS TAKEN OR BEING PLANNED

The MSIG

A subgroup of the MSIG has to date discussed the results of the Black Alumni Survey with the following individuals and groups: the President, the Provost, the Chair of the Faculty, the Dean for Undergraduate Education, the Academic Council, the Humanities and Social Science School Council, the Engineering School Council, the Science School Council, the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs, the S-MSIG, a group of Black faculty, a group of approximately 40 Black faculty and administrators, and the Equal Opportunity Committee. Several ideas for action were generated through these sessions, especially those held with the Black faculty and with the Black faculty and administrators.

During the 1986 Residence/Orientation (R/O) week for the Class of 1990, pluralism and the unacceptability of racist behavior at MIT were covered in the small-group welcome discussions with freshmen that were led by Dean's Office and other administrative staff, faculty, and upperclass students. A major workshop on problems of racist behavior in the living groups and on fostering pluralism in the living environment was conducted by two MSIG members at the day-long orientation program held during R/O week for new and returning Faculty and Graduate Residents.

In early September, these topics were discussed by individual MSIG members during a number of orientation sessions, including the workshops for New Faculty, Freshman Advisors and Associate Advisors, and Teaching Assistants. The September presentation to the Equal Opportunity Committee on the Black Alumni Survey also included recommendations for possible initiatives by that Committee.

During the fall, presentations on the survey results and recommendations contained in this report are planned for the Faculty Council, staff in the Personnel Office, the Institute's Equal Opportunity Committee, the Committee on Student Affairs, Faculty Residents in Institute Houses, and the teaching staffs for the major core subjects. Also during the fall, an article on the racial climate at the Institute will appear in Tech Talk.

Now that we have a set of recommendations, the first dealing with the racial climate at the Institute, MSIG members expect to meet again, as mutually agreed upon, with the School Councils with whom meetings were held earlier. We hope to also make a follow-up report to the Academic Council during the term.

Meetings will also be sought with the two remaining Schools, the Faculty Policy Committee, and the Department Heads at one of their monthly meetings. We are also recommending that this report be discussed at a fall Faculty meeting.

In November, the racial climate at the Institute will form a major part of the discussion of the two-day meeting of the Institute's Visiting Committee on Student Affairs.

The Institute

As mentioned earlier, the Institute continues to demonstrate in a number of significant ways its commitment to the presence of minorities on campus.

This commitment is clear through the Institute's long-term support of special offices and activities on behalf of minority students, through the presence of minority staff in many of the offices that provide services to students, and through its willingness to support new initiatives on behalf of current and potential minority students.

This concern for the personal and academic growth and development of minority students is also illustrated through the Institute's support of new and continuing enrichment initiatives for potential MIT, minority students -- programs such as the Minority Summer Science Program, the A Better Chance-MIT Careers in Medicine Program, the Lincoln Laboratory Program, and the MIT Minority Introduction to Engineering and Science (MITES) Program.

The significant increase in the last two years in the number of minority administrators present in offices throughout the Institute is a clear indication of MIT's interest in diversity in its administrative staff. Concrete results in this regard can be found in such areas as student affairs, financial operations, admissions, career services, sponsored research, personnel, and resource development. Supervisors in these and other areas where minorities have been employed are demonstrating that where there is commitment, there can be results.

The broadly based support for and involvement of administrators and faculty from around the Institute in the efforts of the MSIG, some for as long as two years, clearly reflect the concern and interest of many individuals at the Institute in the issues being explored and the solutions being sought.

The growing interest in the results of the Black Alumni Survey and in identifying ways to address the issues raised through that initiative is one more indication of the willingness of many individuals at the Institute to work to eliminate racist behavior in this community. They indicate a readiness to make greater efforts to provide an environment that is supportive, non-hostile, and generally conducive to successful performance, especially by students.

While much remains to be done, we believe there is broad-based support for additional efforts to move us closer toward this goal. It is in this spirit and in the belief that further change is possible, that the MSIG presents the following set of recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the serious concerns raised in this report regarding the racial climate at the Institute, **the MSIG believes it important for the Corporation, the President, and the Provost to take the lead in reaffirming the Institute's commitment** to providing an environment in which there are clear signals that the presence of minorities is desired; in which their contributions are encouraged, recognized, and valued; in which genuine efforts are being made to increase the presence of minorities on campus, especially in the student body and in academic positions, and to retain those already present; and in which instances of racism and racist behavior are dealt with swiftly and firmly.

General Tone and Overview

The survey results point to a clear need to remind the MIT community that discriminatory or racist behavior is unacceptable at MIT and to affirm that individuals displaying such behavior will be held accountable for their actions. An atmosphere of receptivity to the reporting of perceived racist behavior and of a commitment to a speedy and thorough review of such charges must be created. **New policies may be needed regarding possible disciplinary responses to racist behavior as are procedures for reporting alleged racist incidents. Responsibility for developing such policies and procedures might be given to the Equal Opportunity Committee and the Equal Opportunity Office.**

Indications from the Corporation of its continued interest in and concern for the quality of life for minorities, especially students and faculty, in the MIT environment would signal to the community that this is an issue of great importance and seriousness. **The creation of a Visiting Committee to address issues related to the general welfare of minorities throughout all departments and offices on campus, possibly with representation from each of the existing Visiting Committees, is one example of steps that might be taken.** Such a structure would facilitate the flow of information and ideas and could result in a greater understanding of the problems and potential solutions within the departments and their respective visiting committees.

The MSIG recommends that consideration be given to requesting an internal committee, for example, the Equal Opportunity Committee, to pursue the issues identified in this report and to keep the Corporation informed on a periodic basis either via the President or through the Visiting Committee suggested above. Other suggestions for expanding the current scope of the Equal Opportunity Committee are outlined in the next section.

The alumni survey results and the quality of life forums that focused on the experiences of minority undergraduates identified incidents of racist behavior by individual faculty members as a major problem Black students felt they faced. These incidents call for specific response from the faculty to address the concerns raised. **The MSIG urges the Faculty Policy Committee to develop a statement of professional responsibilities for faculty with respect to racist behavior and racism, and to consider ways to ensure its implementation.**

In our discussions of the alumni survey results with faculty, we found support for the proposition that **faculty should be helping with the personal and academic growth and development of students** and should not be engaged in behavior that diminishes self-esteem and self-confidence as reported in the survey.

We also found agreement that **faculty should initiate and develop strategies to help minority students deal with feelings of isolation** from and lack of access to departmental resources. There was a recognized need for faculty and teaching assistants to demonstrate greater interest in and willingness to assist minority students. These are reasonable expectations and are consistent with the Institute's desire to provide a supportive environment for its students.

The alumni survey results also contained several examples of difficulties experienced by minority students in the living groups. In this regard, a series of specific recommendations will be made to the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs. These recommendations speak to **the need for greater involvement and concern about the racial climate in the living groups by the Faculty and Graduate Residents** in each of the Houses, for a concerted effort to **hire more minority personnel in housing at all levels,** but especially in Faculty and Graduate Resident positions, and for **periodic workshops on issues of racial and ethnic awareness for all residential staff.**

Special efforts to heighten sensitivity and awareness should be undertaken also **by the Personnel Department, including supervisory and other personal and group development seminars.** All offices serving students should give serious consideration to holding such seminars for their respective staffs.

A discussion of pluralism and the Institute's goals in this area, as well as the unacceptability of racist behavior and the measures that will be taken against offenders, **should be a regular part of the orientation of all new personnel.** New personnel should also be given copies of the brochures on racism and harassment.

It is very easy to assume that the problems outlined in this report are being caused by others; therefore, **every manager or supervisor at the Institute is encouraged to develop ways to ensure that each member of his or her staff is cognizant of the issues raised in this report and of the responsibilities each employee has for making this environment hospitable** to all members of the MIT community.

Equal Opportunity Responsibility

Affirmative action responsibilities are undertaken both by the Equal Opportunity Office (EOO) and the Equal Opportunity Committee (EOC), with the former working with personnel in administrative areas and the latter giving most of its attention to faculty issues. Given the positive affirmative action results in several administrative offices, we are encouraged to learn that some of the successful approaches used by the EOO (such as the frequent meetings and detailed reviews of progress with each

senior officer) are now being attempted in academic departments, with appropriate modifications, by the EOC.

Nevertheless, **several members of the MSIG expressed the view that the President and Provost should re-examine the role of the Equal Opportunity Office** with an eye toward increasing the Office's visibility in the community and strengthening and expanding its current activities, initiatives, and monitoring roles. Such strengthening, they believe, would increase the office's effectiveness and credibility within the community.

The MSIG believes it is important for the MIT community to be kept informed of the outcomes of our affirmative action efforts and so **we recommend that the Institute publish annually the affirmative action profile of students and the workforce in Tech Talk**, noting changes from the previous year as well as providing such information as the number of positions available, the number of applicants, and the number of hires by race or ethnic background, and by gender that occurred during each year.

It is also important for the community to be reminded that equal opportunity and affirmative action expectations form an integral part of every supervisor's responsibilities. **We recommend it be made clear to supervisors that affirmative action responsibilities include the hiring of both minorities and women, that a review of their efforts in this area will form an integral part of their performance evaluations, and that recommendations for compensation will be affected by the outcome of their efforts.** We support recent statements from the President and a memorandum from the Provost to the members of the Academic Council in which this expectation was explicitly stated.

As a means of recognizing individuals for their affirmative action accomplishments, **the Equal Opportunity Committee might consider the establishment of Extraordinary Achievement Awards** to honor MIT faculty or staff who make significant contributions to the Institute's efforts to promote equal opportunity. The advantages of such public recognition extend beyond those accorded to an individual. The importance the Institute places on equal opportunity is reinforced, and other members of the MIT community may be encouraged to strengthen their affirmative action efforts.

Hiring Minority Faculty

The Institute's record on hiring minority faculty is of grave concern to us as it is to many persons at the Institute. The MSIG recognizes its need to gather more information and to do more thinking about this area before making specific recommendations. While our fourth paper will focus on this topic, we do feel it appropriate at this time to suggest the following:

- **Departments should continue to make special efforts to hire minority faculty in their normal searches and appointments.**

- **The Institute should identify minority individuals from around the country with the qualifications necessary to become members of the various departmental faculties at the Institute. Establishing an institutional data base of potential minority faculty, possibly through**

the Equal Opportunity Office, would be an important first step. Designating a faculty member within each of the departments to identify and recruit minority faculty could also prove to be effective.

- The April 1980 presidential memorandum on the availability of special funds for hiring minority faculty should be updated, if necessary, and re-circulated to all faculty.

- The minority post-doctoral program at the Institute should be given greater visibility and its potential as a means for identifying minority faculty emphasized.

- Departments should make special efforts to increase their numbers of minority teaching assistants, research assistants, post-doctoral appointments, and visiting faculty.

- Departments should seriously consider their own minority graduate students and post-doctoral appointees when attempting to identify potential MIT faculty members.

Promoting Pluralism

There are initiatives that could be taken by the departments to help increase mutual respect and appreciation for the abilities and contributions of various groups represented within our community. These include: (1) enlisting Black faculty in the teaching of "core" courses; (2) adding subjects that deal with race and the history, literature, culture, and scientific and engineering contributions of Blacks and other minority groups; (3) integrating such concepts into existing subjects; and (4) offering Undergraduate Seminars, residentially-based Theme Seminars, Institute-wide colloquia, or IAP activities in these areas.

In addition, the MSIG strongly encourages minority and non-minority faculty to embrace the pluralistic ideal as an MIT goal, a goal that fits particularly well MIT's diverse composition and self-image as a university focused on inventing the future. In this sense, all MIT faculty members should see it as their challenge to support minority students and minority colleagues in their efforts to contribute to the academic life of the Institute.

Minority and non-minority students are encouraged to make special efforts to know members of different racial or ethnic backgrounds; to support each other as individuals and as groups; to attend functions sponsored by different racial or cultural groups; and to jointly plan activities of interest to different groups in the community.

To further encourage pluralism at MIT, the MSIG recommends special efforts be made by staff of all of the Institute-affiliated news services (e.g., The Tech, Tech Talk, and Technology Review) to include coverage of minority events and issues on a regualr basis in their publications. They should ensure a fair, accurate, and balanced portrayal of these issues and activities, taking care that their publications do not inadvertently reinforce stereotypes about members of minority groups.

Final Note

It should be noted that the recommendations made by the MSIG in this report represent the views of the majority of the members of the group. Given the way in which the group is evolving over time (from 4 individuals in the summer of 1984 to 27 at the time of this report), all of the current members have not participated in all of the discussions leading to the recommendations in this report or to those recommendations to be provided separately to various offices. There are some recommendations that are not endorsed by all 27 members. However, no recommendation has been made for which there is less than majority support among the current membership.

Future plans of the MSIG include three additional reports with recommendations in the respective areas of recruitment, admissions, and financial aid; supporting minority students so that they can experience greater academic and personal success at MIT; and recruitment of minority faculty. In addition, we plan to form a task group to study the experiences of minority graduate students at MIT. We expect to expand our membership to include faculty and staff interested in this and other areas we will explore (e.g., recruitment of minority faculty, support services for minority students, and several research activities). We encourage other members of the community interested in joining any of our various discussion groups or in suggesting other areas that might be considered to contact any member of the MSIG.

The S-MSIG will continue meeting during the year and will expand to include additional students. It will continue to discuss issues in the learning and living environments and to identify possible ways to promote inter-racial and inter-cultural communications.

All of our efforts have the ultimate goal of making the pluralistic ideal a reality at MIT. We encourage each member of the MIT community, in her or his own way, to join in making this a mutually respecting, supporting, and enriching environment for all of its members.

APPENDICES

CHRONOLOGY OF THE MINORITY STUDENT ISSUES GROUP (MSIG)

Spring 1984 ODSA distributes Quality of Student Life Survey to 1000 undergraduates, including all minority groups

Follow-up Forums held with different student groups including two with minority students

Summer 1984 Perkins, McBay, Heine, and Meldman meet to discuss minority student performance

Meldman asked to study performance for previous 10-year period

Fall 1984 Group discusses progress of Meldman study and attrition rates; reviews Jones-Minor performance study prepared two years earlier

Gray requests performance study be extended to previous 25-year period

Simonides, Williams, and Cooper join the group

Goals set for performance, graduation, and overall experience at Institute for minority students

Jan-Mar 1985 Armstrong and McClellan review recruitment and selection process as it applies to minority students

Manning and Armstrong join the group

Discussion of "predictors of success" guidelines

Review of minority student-freshman advisor assignment process

Gates, Miller, and Payne of OME join the group

Gates gives examples of unreliability of standard admissions measures as predictors of success at MIT

Apr-June 1985 Decision made to interview Black alumni

Wilson hired to join Wiley in conducting the Black Alumni Survey

Group requests and receives recognition as "official" group from the President; Behnke, A. Smith, and Davison join the MSIG. Gallagher discusses financial aid process as it applies to minority students and joins MSIG

Apr-June 1985 (cont'd)
Major MSIG task forces formed

Jul-Sept 1985 Hecht makes presentation on alumni services

OME begins reporting to Dean for Student Affairs

Gibson and Keyser join MSIG

Weatherall discusses career services and joins MSIG

Task Force on Support Services reports to MSIG

Oct-Dec 1985 Task Force on Issues revises earlier goal statement

MSIG reviews Hammond and Howard article from The New Republic entitled "Rumors of Inferiority"

Alumni telephone interviews conducted

Cravahlo discusses MITES Program

Gibson reports on 1985 Project Interphase

Jan-Mar 1986 Alumni Task Force presents initial summary on findings

Research Task Force gives progress report

MSIG discusses long-range improvement plan

Gittens, Grado, Ramseur, Randolph, Sherwood, and R. Smith join MSIG

Apr-June 1986 Henderson, Shaw, and Picardi join MSIG

Plans discussed for conducting Exit Interviews with Graduating Seniors

Gibson discusses major changes in Project Interphase

Behnke discusses new PATHWAY TO FUTURE Program

MSIG reviews distribution of minority students in living groups and in academic departments. Presentation on Black Alumni Survey results made to President, Provost, Chair of the Faculty, and Dean for Undergraduate Education

Similar presentations made separately to HASS and Engineering School Councils

Apr-June 1986 (cont'd)

Articles on minorities at MIT appear in the Globe

S-MSIG (student version of MSIG) formed

Task Force on Recruitment, Admissions, and Financial Aid makes its report

MSIG and S-MSIG review studies from three other institutions that involve MSIG-like issues

Jul-Sept 1986 Braithwaite and Campbell join MSIG

Presentation made to Science Council on alumni survey results

Snyder discusses his reactions to Black Alumni Survey summary with MSIG

Task Force on Student Support Services reports

Decision made to prepare three separate MSIG reports for release to the community

Brochure on racism prepared by the MSIG and the S-MSIG

Proposal to establish Equal Opportunity Achievement Awards made to the President and the Provost

Presentation on survey results made to group of Black faculty and administrators

Simonides sends letter to the Globe editor regarding earlier articles on minorities

Follow-up meeting held with group of Black Faculty

Meeting held with Black Faculty and Administrators on reading admissions folders and becoming freshman advisors

Group decides on a fourth paper on minority faculty is needed

Pluralistic ideal is discussed in small "welcome" groups of entering freshmen

Racism and pluralism are discussed at orientation workshops for new faculty, freshman advisors and associate advisors, and teaching assistants

Tewhey and Rowe join the group

Presentation is made to the EOC on Black Alumni Survey and on recommendations regarding possible EOC initiatives

DETAILS ON CHRONOLOGY OF MSIC

Spring 1984

During the Spring of 1984 the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs (ODSA) distributed a Quality of Student Life Survey to 1000 undergraduates, including all minority undergraduates. Several follow-up forums were held with different student groups, including minority students, to better understand the experience of undergraduate students at the Institute.

The survey and the forums suggested that life for minority students at MIT was significantly different from that for non-minority undergraduates. Minority students expressed a number of specific and serious concerns:

- feelings of isolation;
- insecurity about their admission to MIT because of the perception that others felt lower standards are used in the admission of minority students;
- perception that others feel all minority students are high risks;
- anxiety about the ability of their families to provide the financial assistance expected by the Institute;
- perceived contempt from non-minority students, faculty, administrators, and staff;
- feeling of non-acceptance by faculty;
- and the existence of a generally non-supportive environment in which minorities must constantly prove they are equal, both intellectually and socially.

Other evidence that life was significantly different for minority students could be found in the end-of-term summary reports on actions by the Committee on Academic Performance (CAP). Minority students tend to be disproportionately represented among those receiving warnings and required withdrawals from the CAP.

Summer 1984

To obtain a more accurate picture of minority student performance, Associate Provost Frank Perkins and Dean Shirley McBay asked Dean Jeffrey Meldman during the Summer of 1984 to conduct a study of minority student performance at the Institute for the previous ten years. The small number of non-Black minority students present at the Institute during this time period led to the decision to focus the study on Black students. At the time of the study, the Office of Minority Education (OME) which is concerned with providing academic support services to minority students was reporting to Provost Perkins and he was also serving as its Acting Director.

Fall 1984

During the Fall of 1984, a group consisting of Associate Provost Perkins and Deans McBay, Meldman, and Holliday Heine held meetings to discuss the progress of the Meldman study and other concerns about the experiences of minority undergraduates. We also reviewed a study by Professors Frank Jones

and Hassan Minor on minority students that had been authorized two years earlier by Provost Perkins in connection with the search for a Director of the Office of Minority Education.

The 10-year academic performance study by Meldman was extended to 25 years in response to a request from President Paul Gray to his Special Assistant, Clarence Williams. Vice President Constantine Simonides, Dr. Williams, and Dean Janice Cooper (whose responsibilities included working with minority student groups) began to meet with us. This group began to be referred to as the Minority Student Issues Group.

In addition to reviewing the results of this study, the MSIG talked about the attrition rate for minority students (roughly 30% over a seven-year period) being twice that for all students (approximately 15% over a seven-year period). We found these statistics unacceptable and spent some time discussing goals toward which the Institute should be working in these areas.

The following major goals emerged from these early MSIG discussions:

(1) To increase the graduation rate of minority students so that it is at least as high as the overall graduation rate

(2) To achieve an academic performance level by minority students that is comparable to that of other students

(3) To improve the quality of the overall academic and non-academic experience for minority students so that it is roughly the same as that for all students

Prior to developing plans for accomplishing these goals, it became clear that we needed to have a better understanding of the current recruitment and admissions process.

January-March 1985

As a consequence, during January 1985 we undertook the task of trying to understand MIT's recruitment and admissions process better, with a specific interest in selection criteria. Professor Ken Manning, in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on Undergraduate Admissions and Financial Aid (CUAFA), was asked to join the MSIG. Nelson Armstrong and Julie McLellan of the Admissions staff reviewed the 18-month recruitment and selection process for us. There was considerable discussion, although not complete understanding, of the process used to recruit and select minority students.

Two reports (prepared in 1975 and in 1978) by Sandra Cohen of the Admissions Staff on the performance of minority students at MIT and on guidelines for determining the admission of some minority students were made available to us, but were not discussed in any detail.

The guidelines are a combination of grades and test scores which, according to Cohen, suggest a student has a good chance of success at MIT. Most non-minority students have combinations of grades and test scores that exceed the guidelines, and since so few of them are admitted, it is not necessary to use the screen to determine their admission. By contrast, few minority students

apply to MIT, so that it is frequently necessary to use the screen to decide whether a minority student has a good chance of success here.

We also learned that admissions folders of minority students were only read by more "experienced" readers and by readers, judged by the Admissions staff, to be sensitive to minority students' background, further suggesting that a special admissions process was followed for minority applicants. Experience has obviously suggested the need for such deviations.

Following the discussion of the recruitment and admissions process, Nelson Armstrong became a regular MSIG member. The group next decided to move to the issue of the selection of advisors for minority freshmen. In February 1985, Professor James Gates, Acting Director of OME, and OME staff members Pearline Miller and Gloria Payne were asked to join the group for a discussion of this issue. The separate process used in the assignment of minority freshmen to advisors was described to us. The intent was to match these students with advisors who were known to be especially supportive of minority students.

The assignment of advisors to freshmen is the responsibility of the Undergraduate Academic Support (UAS) section of the ODSA. It was clear that the respective roles of OME and of the UAS in the assignment of advisors needed to be made more precise and greater communication between staff in the two offices was strongly encouraged. Following these discussions, the OME staff members were invited to join the MSIG.

During March 1985, Professor Gates shared his perspectives with the group on minority admissions, demonstrating with specific examples how unpredictable the standard admissions measures are of "success" at MIT. We also spent some time talking about Project Interphase and how participants are selected, noting that there was some deviation in this process during Dr. William MacLaurin's tenure as Director of OME.

We also learned from Dean Heine about the existence of a "high risk" list of entering freshmen apparently prepared each year by Peter Richardson, the former Director of Admissions. We wanted more information about these lists, including factors used to construct them and how and by whom the lists were used. However, obtaining this information was apparently not possible since Mr. Richardson was no longer at the Institute. We also spent time discussing our individual perceptions of the characteristics students need for "success" at MIT.

April-June 1985

In April 1985, we began to identify other aspects of the MIT undergraduate experience for minority students that needed to be reviewed if we were to develop a long-term improvement plan to achieve the goals identified earlier.

Several studies were clearly needed; however, staff with the expertise to conduct these studies were not available to the MSIG. One example of possible studies identified at that time was a follow-up of minority and non-minority students who entered as freshmen during the five-year period 1976-80 and subsequently dropped out of MIT. Among other things, we wanted to know why

the students dropped out, whether they eventually graduated from another college, what they were currently doing, and how they felt about their MIT experience, especially as it affected what they did after leaving the Institute.

We also felt it was important to interview minority alumni to understand better how they felt about their MIT undergraduate experience while here and as preparation for what they have done since leaving the Institute; their thoughts about the kind of student most likely to succeed here; and their ideas about how to improve the MIT experience for minority students.

Vice President Simonides and Dr. David Wiley of the Analytical Studies and Planning Group reviewed for us the process used in a major survey of MIT Alumni in 1974. It was quite clear from this review that we needed extra help if we were to conduct a survey of minority alumni as desired. Fortunately, Mr. Simonides was able to secure the necessary resources to employ Dr. John Wilson to work with Dr. Wiley and the MSIG on the survey. While a student at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Dr. Wilson had served as an intern in the ODSA and as staff to the Institute's presidentially appointed Task Force on Financial Aid.

We also felt the need to become more "legitimate" as an Institute group and so in April we asked for and received recognition and suggestions from President Gray.

In May 1985, Michael Behnke, the new Director of Admissions, became a member of the MSIG when he joined the MIT community. To increase the representation of faculty on the MSIG, we asked Professors Arthur Smith and Alan Davison to join us because of their long time interest and involvement in special programs for minority students.

The MSIG explored in depth several other areas affecting the undergraduate student experience from the perspective of minority students including the financial aid process.

Leonard Gallagher, Director of the Student Financial Aid Office, provided the group with some history on the financial aid process as applied to minority students at the Institute, specifically describing the policies and practices during the period 1960-68 and the period 1969-1985. Detailed information on the financial aid process and how it affects minority students will be provided in the second report of the MSIG. Len became a regular member of the MSIG following his presentation.

In June 1985, several task groups of the MSIG were formed, including the following: Issues chaired by McBay; Recruitment and Admissions chaired by Behnke; Financial Aid chaired by Gallagher; Support Structure for Minority Students chaired by Heine; Quality of Life for Minority Students chaired by Cooper; Placement and Alumni Services chaired by Williams; the MIT Experience of Minority Alumni (chaired by Wiley and Wilson); and a Research Group chaired by Meldman. Over the next several months, each of the groups held several meetings which eventually led to the preparation of individual reports by most of the groups on their activities and findings.

July-September 1985

In July, the group heard a report from William Hecht, Executive Vice President of the Alumni Association, on various services available to minority alumni through Association activities, including through the Black Alumni of MIT (BAMIT). Dr. Michael Fant, President of BAMIT, was unable to attend as had been planned.

Also in July, the Office of Minority Education began reporting to the Dean for Student Affairs and Dr. Joyce Gibson became a member of the MSIG when she assumed the position of Director of OME in August, 1985. Associate Provost Jay Keyser also joined the MSIG during this period.

During August, Robert Weatherall, Director of Career Services, joined the group following a discussion of services available through his office for all students and of those specifically involving minority students. For example, we learned of the office's work with companies and graduate schools in their efforts to recruit MIT minority students, and of a list of minority students prepared, with the students' prior permission, by the office for potential employers.

Bob also provided information to the group on what minority and non-minority students do following graduation and on the average salary offers members of these two groups receive. There were no noticeable discrepancies in the various categories of activities following graduation or in starting salaries except that a greater percentage of minority graduates entered medical school than did non-minority graduates during each of the years examined. More details on activities in Career Services will be contained in the third report of the MSIG.

In September, we discussed a report on services offered by various student support offices prepared by Holly Heine and Pearline Miller.

October-December 1985

In October, the Issues Task Group revised its earlier statement of the goals to be reached through the proposed long-term improvement plan. The following goals were contained in this revised statement:

(1) Increase the number of minority students who complete application to MIT

(2) Achieve an academic performance level by minority students that is more comparable to that of other students

(3) Increase the graduation rate of minority students so that it is the same as or better than the overall graduation rate

(4) Use the specific concerns expressed by minority students through the 1984 Quality of Student Life Survey and Forums to develop ways of obtaining a more accurate picture of the undergraduate experience for minority students at MIT (leading ultimately to a more informed set of remedies for improving that experience)

(5) Establish a credible research process (to be eventually housed in OME) and an accurate research base for the periodic examination of the academic performance of minority students and of other factors that may be influencing the quality of the undergraduate experience for minority students at the Institute.

The Task Group felt that these goals should be accomplished without a reduction in the number of minority students admitted to the Institute

In October, the MSIG had a lively discussion of the Hammond and Howard article appearing in the September 1985 edition of The New Republic entitled, "Rumors of Inferiority." Professor Vernon Ingram, Chairman of the Committee on Academic Performance, was able to join us for this discussion. Unfortunately, he was unable to continue meeting with the group because of other commitments. We appreciated his presence at this and an earlier meeting of the MSIG.

Plans for the Black Alumni survey were refined during this period and the majority of the telephone interviews occurred during the month of November. Also in November, we had a presentation on MIT's Minority Introduction to Engineering and Science (MITES) Program by the Program's Director, Professor Ernie Cravahlo.

At our December meeting, we heard part of a report on the 1985 Project Interphase from Dr. Joyce Gibson and her staff.

January-March 1986

The MSIG did not meet during January; one of the two meetings held in February was devoted to a summary report on the Black Alumni Survey given by John Wilson, David Wiley, and their assistant, Inez Robinson. At the second meeting in February, we had a progress report from Jeff Meldman, chair of the Research Task Force, and Joyce Gibson completed her report on the 1985 Interphase Project.

Our March meeting was devoted to an initial discussion of the development of a long-term plan for improving the Institute's ability to attract and retain minority students. We spent time discussing issues identified by the respective task groups as ones they felt should be raised/addressed in such a plan.

By March 1986, the MSIG membership had expanded to include Yvonne Gittens of the Financial Aid Office, Eddie Grado of Admissions, Howard Ramseur of the Medical Department, Robert Randolph and Robert Sherwood of the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs, and Ron Smith of the Registrar's Office.

April-June 1986

During this period, the MSIG membership expanded to include Arnold Henderson of the Dean's Office, Ann Shaw of Career Services, and Shirley Picardi of the Bursar's Office.

Plans were developed for conducting exit interviews with seniors graduating in June immediately following graduation. MSIG members reacted favorably to

plans to fundamentally change the 1986 Project Interphase in the following two ways:

(1) All minority students would be extended an invitation to attend the seven-week Interphase session even though only approximately 40 slots were available.

(2) A second session of two weeks duration would be held during August and would be open to minority students not attending the first session. This session is devoted primarily to orienting the participants to the Institute and to its academic offerings and support services.

During this period, we also had an opportunity to react to the brochure describing the PATHWAY TO THE FUTURE Program that was developed by an Ad Hoc Group convened by Michael Behnke to discuss a Minority Student Incentive Program. In addition to Behnke, the group consisted of William Hecht of the Alumni Association, and MSIG members Gallagher, Gibson, Grado, and Weatherall. This program will be discussed in detail in the MSIG's second report.

Ron Smith of the Registrar's Office did special computer runs for the MSIG that allowed us to obtain a general picture of where minority students are living. We were able to review the number and percentage representation of each minority group within each of the Institute Houses and each of the Independent Living Groups. This distribution pattern revealed low minority presence in several dormitories and Independent Living Groups. These concerns will be followed up on by the Residence and Campus Activities section of the Dean's Office and will be discussed in more detail in the third MSIG report.

The MSIG also reviewed the distibution pattern of minority students within the various academic departments for the 1985-86. The five most attractive departments to minority students were the same as those for the overall student body. There were several departments with few or no minority students as majors.

The MSIG recognizes the clear need for research in several areas, including those just discussed. Such studies clearly fall within the charge of the Office of Minority Education and the Dean's Office. However, the expertise to conduct these studies does not exist in either office and a request has been made in the five-year plans of these offices to add such a position during Fiscal Year 1988.

The first presentation outside of the MSIG on the results of the Black Alumni survey was made in May to a group consisting of the President, the Provost, the Chair of the Faculty, the Associate Provost for Educational Programs and Policy (an MSIG member), and the Dean for Undergraduate Education.

Presentations were also made during this period to the Academic Council, the Humanities and Social Science School Council, the Engineering School Council, and to the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs. Each of the Councils asked that the MSIG subgroup return for a follow-up discussion after the MSIG had an opportunity to develop some recommendations for action. John Wilson of the MSIG in each case presented a summary of the survey

findings; other members of the MSIG participating in these discussions were Behnke, Gibson, Manning, McBay, Smith, Wiley, and Williams.

Another major development was the appearance of a series of articles in the Boston Globe that primarily focused on minority students at predominantly white institutions. One of the articles, "Alienation widespread at many white institutions," appeared on the front page of the May 19 Boston Globe with a companion article on page 10 entitled "M.I.T.'s admission policy comes under scrutiny." Both articles referred to a 1981 study of Black student performance at MIT and implied that some Black students at MIT may not be qualified to study here.

An institutional response to these articles was sent on August 20, some three months after the articles appeared. Several MSIG members had repeatedly conveyed the importance of a timely institutional response to the morale of current (and past) Black students as well as to ensure a more accurate perception by the general public of the minority undergraduate experience at MIT. As reported earlier in this section of the report, the 1981 study referred to is the so-called Jones and Minor study which has never been presented as an official and valid MIT study.

During May, the S-MSIG, a student/administrator version of the MSIG held its first meeting. The group was formed so that the MSIG could begin to obtain student input in a more systematic fashion. See the inside back cover of this report for the S-MSIG membership list.

The MSIG reviewed and provided some response to the report of the Task Group on Recruitment, Admissions, and Financial Aid chaired by Michael Behnke. This group replaced two separate task groups on recruitment and admissions and on financial aid.

The MSIG and the S-MSIG also reviewed studies from three other institutions, each of which examined some aspect of the various issues with which the MSIG is concerned. The Brown University report, the only one of the three to be published and the one most closely related to our interests, is referenced in the first part of this report.

July-September 1986

During this period, the MSIG membership expanded to include Ken Campbell of the News Office, Marilyn Braithwaite, and Jim Tewhey of the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs, and Mary Rowe of the President's Office.

We devoted two meetings during this period to a discussion with Professor Ben Snyder of his memorandum on the Black Alumni survey report. Professor Snyder prepared this memorandum in response to a request from President Paul Gray. The discussions and the memorandum were quite provocative. They focused on Professor Snyder's initial thoughts on four themes: (1) the social and psychological consequences of poor preparation; (2) intellectual arrogance in an elite institution; (3) race and the two curricula; and (4) one possible significance of surprise as an Institutional response to race.

The MSIG also reviewed and reacted to the report of the Task Group on Student Support Services chaired by Joyce Gibson and the MSIG subgroup described earlier made a presentation at a meeting of the Science School Council in July.

A major decision was made that the MSIG would prepare a series of four reports:

(1) The Racial Climate on the MIT Campus

(2) The Recruitment, Admissions, and Financial Aid Process for Minority Students

(3) Supporting Success in Minority Students

(4) Recruiting Minority Faculty

This decision was based on the need to alert the MIT community to the extent and kind of racist behavior in our midst so that remedies might begin to be developed immediately. We felt that the findings and recommendations on the many issues that we explored could more easily be absorbed in four separate reports than in a single, voluminous report. In addition, we decided that some recommendations would be made directly to relevant offices or committees rather than through the series of reports.

Another important development during this period was the preparation of a brochure on racism, a joint effort of the MSIG and the S-MSIG. As in the case of the harassment brochure some two years earlier, the initial draft of this brochure was prepared by John Wilson, by request.

A memorandum proposing the establishment of Equal Opportunity Achievement Awards, patterned after awards in existence at the National Science Foundation was sent from Dean McBay to President Gray and Provost Deutch for their consideration. The proposed awards are described in the recommendation section of this report; the proposal has been referred to the Equal Opportunity Committee for consideration at one of its meetings in the fall.

During July, a presentation on the Black Alumni Survey results was made by the MSIG subgroup to approximately 40 Black faculty and administrators. The group, which contained several recently hired administrators, expressed an interest in helping to form a stronger support network for current minority students and so a follow-up meeting in August was held. At this meeting, there was a discussion of what is involved in reading admissions folders and in serving as a freshman advisor.

The MSIG subgroup also held a follow-up meeting with Black faculty which was also attended by MSIG members Keyser and Simonides and by senior administrators John Turner and Issac Colbert. This meeting generated a number of excellent ideas for helping to improve the racial climate at the Institute and many of these have been or will be incorporated into recommendations contained in our report.

During the Residence/Orientation period in September, the concepts of pluralism were discussed in the small group welcome discussions with entering freshmen. MSIG member Marilyn Braithwaite and S-MSIG member Jackie Simonis conducted a workshop on racism and pluralism for the new faculty and graduate residents during their day-long orientation meeting. MSIG member Jay Keyser talked about pluralism and racism with new faculty and these topics were also discussed in the orientation workshop for new teaching assistants conducted by MSIG members Frank Perkins and Jeff Meldman.

In September, an MSIG subgroup discussed the results of the Black Alumni Survey with the Equal Opportunity Committee (EOC) as well as some recommendations regarding possible new initiatives the EOC might pursue.

1984 QUALITY OF STUDENT LIFE QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE DEMOGRAPHICS

	SURVEY N	SURVEY %	MIT(a) N	MIT(a) %
GENDER				
MALE	304	(71.9)	3360	(76.3)
FEMALE	119	(28.1)	1044	(23.7)
CLASS				
'87	110	(26.1)	1074	(24.4)
'86	100	(23.7)	1147	(26.0)
'85	108	(25.5)	1036	(23.5)
'84	102	(24.1)	998	(22.7)
Other	2	(0.5)	149	(3.4)
ETHNIC GROUP				
Asian & Pacific Is.	44	(10.8)	513	(11.6)
Black	46	(11.3)	204	(4.6)
Caucasian	261	(64.1)	2967	(67.4)
Hispanic	32	(7.9)	143	(3.2)
Native American	9	(2.2)	18	(0.4)
Non-Resident Alien	15	(3.7)	559	(12.7)
No group given	16	-		
RESIDENCE(b)				
Dormitory	268	(63.7)	2768	(59.9)
On-campus Apt	3	(0.7)	14	(0.3)
Fraternity/ILG	112	(26.6)	1381	(29.9)
Off-campus Apt	27	(6.4)		
Home w/relative	9	(2.1)	453	(9.8)(c)
Other	2	(0.5)		
UNDELIVERABLE	9			
OVERALL SUMMARY OF RESPONSES				
MINORITIES(d)	87	(20.6)		
NON-MINORITIES(e)	320	(75.6)		
UNDECLARED	16	(3.8)		
TOTAL RESPONSE	423			

(a) Source: Registrar's Office Fifth Week Report, March 13, 1984
(b) Source: Office of the Dean for Student Affairs, Fall 1983
(c) All off-campus residence figures combined
(d) Does not include Asian and Pacific Island students
(e) Includes 77 Asian and Pacific Island students

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*- Excerpt from Report to the Visiting Committee on Student Affairs, Office of the Dean for Student Affairs, February 1985

1985 BLACK ALUMNI SURVEY INSTRUMENT, SURVEY METHODS AND SAMPLE

Instrument (Interview Guide)

I. Perceptions of Respondent's MIT Experience

A. Getting Started: how respondent happened to come to MIT
B. Context: some demographics about the experience
C. Broad opening questions: reflections about the respondent's experiences at the Institute, both as a Black student and in general
D. Transition to MIT: comments on feelings about self, adjustments, and preparation
E. Factors that had an effect on academic performance
F. Comments on services available to help students
G. Views of relationships with other students and with faculty, administrators, and other employees

II. Current Perceptions of MIT

A. Satisfaction with professional growth opportunities and salary history in career
B. Current perspective on MIT undergraduate experience
C. Involvement with MIT people since leaving the Institute
D. Contributions of MIT experience to professional or personal life
E. Reflections on whether MIT was best choice for undergraduate education
F. Advice to future Black MIT students
G. Suggestions that would improve the experience of minority students at MIT

III. Demographic Background Information

MIT activities, type of high school attended, last time on campus, other degrees earned, view of financial assistance from MIT

Survey Methods and Sample

During the in-depth telephone interviews, which were conducted following the format of the "interview guide," just described, former MIT students were encouraged to talk about any part of their MIT experience. The kinds of questions used in the survey were designed to be as open-ended as possible, in order to allow respondents to raise whatever issues were on their minds and to tell us not only what they were thinking, but why.

We collected whole conversations and let that information shape the clusters of opinion that emerged from the 170 hours of dialogue. The categories were devised after the interviews, in order to distill and communicate in an organized manner the patterns of opinion and viewpoints that were volunteered at many points throughout the interviews.

Our sample included 137 respondents selected randomly from lists (taken from Institute files) of 671 Black students who entered MIT as undergraduates between 1969 and 1981. There were 42 women (31 percent) in the sample. Current undergraduate students at the Institute were excluded. The sample was stratified in terms of 1) year of entrance to MIT and 2) whether the individual had received an S.B. degree from MIT or had not graduated. The number of alumni in each of the subgroups is reasonably proportional to the representation of that group in the population as a whole from which the sample was drawn. Recent students (1976-81) who had not graduated from MIT, as well as women, are somewhat over-represented in the sample but not enough to make significant differences in the findings.

A letter from the Associate Provost, Samuel J. Keyser, explaining the nature of the survey, was followed by a telephone call to schedule a specific appointment for someone to call to conduct the interview. (If we were unable to schedule an interview, we replaced that individual with another from the same subgroup population, so that the representativeness of the sample was maintained.) During the session, the interviewer wrote down the respondent's own words in space provided on our "interview guide." Most of the interviews were done in November 1985. The overall rate of participation in the survey was 70 percent for those who had graduated, but only 30 percent for those who had not, largely because of difficulties reaching them.

The interviews were conducted by skilled interviewers. Six of the interviewers were graduate students (five doctoral, one master's) at the Institute, who did 60% of the interviews, and five were from the MIT staff (all of whom had previous professional interviewing or counseling experience). All of the interviewers were Black and, because of possible biases in the interviewing process, none had been undergraduates at MIT.

MEMBERSHIP LIST FOR THE S-MSIG, THE STUDENT/ADMINISTRATIVE VERSION OF THE MINORITY STUDENT ISSUES GROUP
August 1986

Shirley McBay, Dean for Student Affairs and S-MSIG Chair
Aida Ayala, '88
Hugo Ayala, '89, 1986 R/O Coordinator
Marilyn Braithwaite, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs
Nicola Chin, '87
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Carol Morris, '87, President of Black Students' Union
Bryan Moser, '87, President, Undergraduate Association
Leo Osgood, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs
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